

Message Text

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42

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 4654

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AS

SUBJ: VISIT TO U.S. BY DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY FEDERAL
SECRETARY, JOHN T. KANE

REF: CANBERRA 3594

1. SUMMARY: FORMER SENATOR JOHN KANE CALLED ON ME JULY 19 TO EXPLAIN PURPOSE OF HIS HURRIED TRIP TO U.S. (REFTEL). PURPOSE WAS TO COLLECT INFO TENDING TO SUBSTANTIATE STORY IN DLP PUBLICATION IN NOV, 1971, IDENTIFYING WILFRED BURCHETT, WELL-KNOWN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST JOURNALIST, AS KGB AGENT. DLP FACES DEFAMATION SUIT BY BURCHETT ON ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

2. AT HIS REQUEST, FORMER SENATOR JOHN T. KANE (DEFEATED IN RECENT SENATE ELECTIONS ON DLP TICKET BUT STILL FEDERAL SECRETARY OF THE PARTY) CALLED ON ME JULY 19. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD NOT TOLD ME OF HIS PURPOSE OF GOING TO THE U.S. IN JUNE (REFTEL) BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT TO EMBARRASS ME. BRIEFLY, IT IS IN CONNECTION WITH A DEFAMATION SUIT BROUGHT BY THE WELL-KNOWN AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST JOURNALIST, WILFRED BURCHETT, AGAINST THE DLP. A DLP MONTHLY PUBLICATION, FOCUS, REFERRED TO BURCHETT AS A KGB AGENT IN ITS NOVEMBER, 1971, ISSUE, RESULTING IN THE LAWSUIT. THE CASE IS PRESENTLY SCHEDULED TO COME TO COURT IN SYDNEY NEXT OCTOBER 16.

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3. KANE HAD GONE TO THE U.S. TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFO ON BURCHETT'S BACKGROUND, IN A FORM PRESENTABLE IN COURT. THE FOCUS ARTICLE HAD TAKEN OFF FROM U.S. CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, BUT THE FOCUS JOURNALIST HAD EMBROIDERED ON THE TESTIMONY TO SOME EXTENT, AND THE DLP NOW FACES A SUIT FOR DAMAGES OF A\$1.0 MILLION.

4. KANE SAID THAT HE HAD HAD CONSIDERABLE COOPERATION WHEN HE WAS IN THE U.S., REFERRING TO ADVICE AND HELP HE HAD FROM RETIRED AMBASSADOR DURBROW (OF AMERICAN SECURITY COUNCIL IN WASHINGTON) AND ED HUNTER OF TACTICS MAGAZINE (PRESUMABLY AUTHOR OF BRAIN WASHING IN RED CHINA). THE ORIGINAL INFO ON CHARGES AGAINST BURCHETT, WHICH FORMED BASIS FOR FOCUS ARTICLE, WAS TESTIMONY OF AN EX-SOVIET CITIZEN, GEORGE CALLIN, WHO HAD IDENTIFIED BURCHETT AS KGB OFFICER. VIET CONG DEFECTOR IN SAIGON, WHO HAD TRAVELLED WITH BURCHETT IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH DLP LAWYERS AND IS PREPARED TO TESTIFY THAT BURCHETT TOLD HIM HE (BURCHETT) WAS KGB OFFICER.

5. KANE COMMENTED THAT AUSTRALIAN DEFAMATION LAWS ARE VERY STRICT, INDEED, AND WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT FUTURE OF DLP WAS, KANE REPLIED THAT THIS DEPENDED ON OUTCOME OF LAWSUIT. KANE SPECULATED THAT WHAT BURCHETT IS AFTER IS NOT MONEY BUT RATHER A CLEAN BILL OF POLITICAL HEALTH. BURCHETT IS PRESENTLY BELIEVED TO BE IN PARIS BUT WILL PRESUMABLY RETURN TO AUSTRALIA FOR TRIAL IN OCTOBER.

6. BURCHETT SUIT AGAINST DLP IS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL LAWSUITS HE IS ENGAGED IN, ALL PRESUMABLY WITH THE SAME OBJECT. BURCHETT IS ALSO SUING DENIS WARNER, WRITER FOR MELBOURNE HERALD AND AGE FOR REMARKS MADE BY WARNER STATING OR IMPLYING BURCHETT IS KGB AGENT.

7. COMMENT: KANE HAS LONG BEEN A GOOD FRIEND OF OUR COUNTRY. HE MADE SEVERAL DISCREET ATTEMPTS DURING OUR CONVERSATION TO ENLIST MY HELP OR COOPERATION IN CONNECTION WITH SUIT, BUT I MADE IT CLEAR THAT NEITHER I NOR USG COULD NOT BE INVOLVED. HE UNDERSTOOD. END COMMENT.
GREEN

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NOTE BY OC/T: PARA 7 AS RECEIVED.

NOTE: REFTEL WAS VISA APPLICATION ONLY. NOT PERTINENT.

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